

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Point Mugu Sea Range Environmental Impact Statement



The land and ocean areas under stewardship of the Sea Range host an extraordinary variety of flora and fauna. The Sea Range is a web of biodiversity that embraces the wetlands of Mugu Lagoon, the sand dunes of San Nicolas Island, the shallow waters around the Channel Islands, and the ocean depths out to 200 miles. The Navy has operated on the Sea Range since 1947. We aggressively pursue our stewardship role of protecting the unique collection of natural and cultural resources under our charge.

Sea Range

The Sea Range is a 36,000 square mile area where the Navy conducts test, evaluation and training activities. In actuality, most of this area is used as a buffer zone to ensure safe operations and sees very little activity. The Navy maintains an extensive Geographical Information System (GIS) database on the sensitive resources found on the Sea Range. This allows Naval operations to be scheduled around sensitive areas and sensitive times of year. All operations are carefully reviewed by our environmental staff to ensure that impacts are minimized. We maintain active inventory and monitoring programs for marine mammals, endangered species, and seabirds on the Sea Range. Our standard range operating procedures include looking for marine mammals in predicted debris and impact areas. If marine mammals are observed in or near a predicted debris area, activities are suspended or moved.



Urocyon littoralis dickeyi

Naval Air Station (NAS) Point Mugu

NAS Point Mugu comprises about 4,500 acres on the California coastline. The base includes one of the most valuable remaining wetlands in southern California, known as Mugu Lagoon. The lagoon is home to several endangered species, a resident colony of harbor seals, and a wide variety of shorebirds. Mugu Lagoon is one of the main stopover points on the Pacific Flyway, making it extremely important to the continued existence of many migratory bird species, not just the resident birds. Consequently, the Navy has developed a very diversified environmental program here. Endangered species monitoring, water quality monitoring, clean up of old contaminated sites, and wetlands restoration, are just parts of the comprehensive program to protect this valuable wetland area.

San Nicolas Island

San Nicolas Island (SNI) is a 13,000-acre desert island located centrally on the Sea Range. The island is home to a number of endemic plant species, large seabird colonies, huge seal and sea lion rookeries, and great archaeological wealth. The island has been under Navy stewardship since 1933. By using only a small percentage of the land, the Navy continues to meet its test, evaluation and training mission, while at the same time protecting the rare and unique resources on the island.



As a general mitigation measure for use of the island, the Navy has closed the south side to all activities. This closure area protects three species of marine mammals, Western Snowy Plovers, Brandt's Cormorants, and California Brown Pelicans specifically. It also provides a "refuge" for all species which require undisturbed beaches.

The Navy maintains its own Native Plant Nursery on SNI to provide native vegetation for erosion control projects, native landscaping, and habitat improvement projects. This helps to ensure that endemic island plants are protected from introduced species which may interfere with their unique biology.

We also maintain a research Field Station. The Field Station serves as the central location for environmental research activities. The Field Station provides laboratory spaces for use by various researchers, and houses our Archaeological Curation Facility. The Field Station facilitates a wide variety of Navy sponsored research, as well as several independent research projects.

Threatened and Endangered Species

NAS Point Mugu

California Least Tern
Light-Footed Clapper Rail
California Brown Pelican
Western Snowy Plover
Salt Marsh Bird's-Beak
Peregrine Falcon
Belding's Savannah Sparrow



San Nicolas Island

California Brown Pelican
Island Night Lizard
San Nicolas Island Fox
Trask's Milkvetch
Beach Spectaclepod
Western Snowy Plover
San Nicolas Island Buckwheat

Sea Range

Blue Whale
Fin Whale
Sei Whale
Humpback Whale
Sperm Whale
Northern Right Whale
Southern Sea Otter
White Abalone

Environmental Awareness

The Navy maintains active programs to inventory and monitor the status of resources on the island. This combined with a long tradition of support for outside research programs, gives us extremely detailed knowledge of all the resources on the island. This resource data is kept in a Geographic Information System (GIS) to allow quick retrieval of the latest research results when evaluating the impacts of proposed Navy projects on the island. Navy resource managers review all proposed activities, construction designs, and land use plans for compliance with environmental mandates.

Some Specific Environmental Programs

Western Snowy Plover. San Nicolas Island is an important nesting and wintering site for this federally listed species. During the breeding season nesting beaches are closed, beaches near operational sites are monitored weekly to determine usage by plovers, and operations modified accordingly, to prevent negative impacts.

Marine Mammals. The south side of San Nicolas Island is closed to all activities year-round. This protects California Sea Lions, Northern Elephant Seals, and Pacific Harbor Seals. Haul-out and birthing sites on the north side of the island are closed during the breeding season.

Seabirds. Brandt's Cormorant and Western Gull rookeries are closed year-round. Sites are monitored weekly to determine breeding chronology and nesting success.



Island Night Lizard. Habitat expansion for this species is accomplished by out-planting of preferred plant cover into barren or restoration areas adjacent to currently utilized habitat. Plants for these projects are propagated in the island native plant nursery.

Archaeological Surveys. Over 500 archaeological sites have been located and mapped on the island. Recent surveys have recorded all sites using GPS mapping techniques for increased accuracy. All site data has been entered into our GIS database for easy retrieval of information when reviewing proposed projects.

Marine Mammal Research. The Navy has compiled all available data on the presence of marine mammals on the Sea Range. This three year effort resulted in the most complete knowledge available on marine mammals in this area.

At Sea Aerial Surveys. The Navy is participating with other federal and state agencies to continue to improve our knowledge of resources at sea. This includes at sea aerial surveys over a three year period. The surveys record the presence of marine mammals and seabirds in a consistent manner to map the distribution and density of these resources. This data is then used to schedule Naval operations to minimize impacts.

Sea Bird Research. We have sponsored research on the distribution of Xantus' murrelets, a sea bird which has been proposed for federal listing. The research shows us which parts of the Sea Range are used by these birds and at what times of year. This allows us to avoid these areas when scheduling Naval operations.

